

Text of Reagan Speech on Contras

Special to the New York Times
WASHINGTON, March 16 — Following is the text of President Reagan's speech tonight on aiding rebel fighting in Nicaragua. Government officials said the speech was prepared by the White House.

"My fellow Americans, I must speak to you tonight about a mounting danger in Central America that threatens the security of the United States. This danger will not go away; it will grow worse, much worse, if we fail to take action now.

I am speaking of Nicaragua, a Soviet ally on the American mainland only two hours' flying time from our own borders. With over a billion dollars in Soviet-bloc aid, the Communist Government of Nicaragua has launched a campaign to subvert and topple its democratic neighbors.

Using Nicaragua as a base, the Soviets and Cubans can become a dominant power in the crucial corridor between North and South America. Established there, they will be in a position to threaten the Panama Canal, interdict our vital Caribbean sea lanes and, ultimately, move against Mexico. Should that happen, desperate Latin peoples by the millions would be fleeing north into the cities of the southern United States, or to wherever some hope of freedom remained.

The United States Congress has before it a proposal to help stop this threat. The legislation is an aid package of \$100 million for the more than 20,000 freedom fighters struggling for democracy to their country and to eliminate this Communist menace at its source. But this bill contains an additional \$100 million. We are not asking for a single dime in new money. We are asking only that we be permitted to spend a small part of our present defense budget — to the defense of our own southern frontier.

'Fighting America Near Its Borders'

Gathered in Nicaragua already are thousands of Cuban military advisers, contingents of Soviet and East German and all the elements of international terrorism — from the P.L.O. to Italy's Red Brigades. Why are they there? Because, as Colonel Qaddafi has publicly admitted, "Nicaragua means a great thing. It means fighting America near its borders. Fighting America at its doorstep."

For our own security the United States must deny the Soviet Union a beachhead in North America. But let me make one thing plain, I am not talking about American troops. They are not needed; they have not been requested. The democratic resistance in Nicaragua is totally self-sufficient. We are asking America for the supplies and support to save their own country from Communism.

The question the Congress of the United States will now answer is a simple one: Will we give the Nicaraguans' democratic resistance the means to recapture their betrayed revolution, or will we turn our backs and ignore the malignancy in the New World, until it spreads and becomes a mortal threat to the entire New World?

If we permit the Soviet Union to put its second Cuba, a second Libya, right on the doorstep of the United States.

How can such a small country pose such a great threat? It is not Nicaragua alone that threatens us, but using Nicaragua as a privileged sanctuary for their struggle against the United States.

Their first target is Nicaragua's neighbors. With an army and militia of 100,000 men, backed by more than 3,000 Cuban military advisers, Nicaragua's armed forces are the largest in Central America. They have sent Nicaraguans' military units to more powerful than all its neighbors combined.

This risk represents much of the Western Hemisphere. Now let me show you the countries in Central America where weapons supplied by Nicaragua are being used. They are: Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama — to the south; and Colombia, Venezuela, South America and the Caribbean. The Nicaraguans' reach extends well beyond their immediate neighbors in South America and the Caribbean, the Nicaraguans have provided support in the form of military training, safe havens, communications, false documents, safe transit and some weapons to radicals and some weapons to the Contras.

Even that is not all, for there was an old Communist slogan that the Sandinistas have made clear they

honor: the road to victory goes through the masses.

If maps, statistics and facts aren't persuasive enough, we have the words of the Sandinista and Soviet themselves. One of the highest Nicaraguans was asked by an American magazine whether the Communist revolution will — and quote — "be exported to El Salvador, then Guatemala, then Honduras, then Mexico." The response was: "The historical prophecy of Ronald Reagan that is absolutely true."

The magazine has been no less candid. A few years ago, the Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko noted that Central America was "boiling like a cauldron" and ripe for revolution. In a Moscow meeting in 1983, Soviet Chief of Staff, Marshal Ogarkov, said: "Over two decades ago there was only Cuba in Latin America. Today there is Nicaragua, Grenada and Cuba. Russia battle is going on in El Salvador."

But we don't need their quotes; the American forces who liberated Grenada captured the same documents that demonstrated Soviet intent to bring Communist revolution home to the Western Hemisphere.

The Intentions

So, we are clear on the intentions of the Sandinistas and those who back them. Let us be equally clear about their means. To begin with, the Sandinistas have revoked the civil liberties of the Nicaraguan people, depriving them of any legal right to work, to travel, to associate, or to worship freely. Independent newspapers have been shut down. There is no independent labor union, labor movement in Nicaragua. Any right to strike. As A.F.L.-C.I.O. leader Lane Kirkland has said, "Nicaragua's head-on assault on the totalitarianism cannot be denied by any who has eyes to see."

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Western Hemisphere passed almost half our foreign trade, more than half our exports of crucial commodities. A significant portion of the military supplies we would have to send to the NATO allies would be sent to Cuba. These are the choke points where the Sandinistas could be closed.

Central America is strategic to our Western alliance, a fact always "destined" by foreign enemies. In World War II, only a few German U-boats operating from a base 100 miles away in Germany and occupied Europe, inflicted crippling losses on U.S. shipping right off our southern coast.

Today, Warsaw Pact engineers are building a deep-water port on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast. Similar to the naval base in Cuba for Soviet-built submarines. They are also constructing, outside Managua, the largest military airfield in Central America — similar to those in Cuba, from the Soviet Union's Red Army base in the U.S. East Coast from Maine to Florida.

Brief History Of Sandinistas

If you did this menace to the peace and security of our Latin neighbors — and ultimately ourselves — will it emerge? Let me give you a brief history.

In 1979, the people of Nicaragua rose up and overthrew a corrupt dictatorship. At first the revolutionaries were a peaceful and democratic force, and they respected human rights. But among them was an organization called the Sandinistas. There was a Communist organization, an underground support of the revolutionary goals was sheer deceit. Quickly and ruthlessly, they took complete control.

Two months after the revolution, the Sandinista leadership met in secret. They are now known as the "72-hour document." They described themselves as the "vanguard" of a revolution that would sweep Central America, Latin America and finally the world. Their true enemy, they declared: the United States.

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Confronted with this emerging threat, early in our Administration I sent a message to Congress and with that message, managed to get help for the nations surrounding Nicaragua. The Senate may remember the inspiring scene when the people of El Salvador braved the threats and dangers of Communist guerrillas — guerrillas directed and supplied from Nicaragua — and went to the polls to vote decisively for the Salvador. For Communist in El Salvador it was a humiliating defeat.

But there was another factor the Sandinistas never counted on, a factor that now promises to give freedom a second chance — the freedom fighters of Nicaragua.

You see, when the Sandinistas brought the revolution, many who had fought the old Somoza dictatorship literally took to the hills, and the French Resistance that fought the Nazis, began fighting the Soviet bloc Communists and the Nicaraguans colon laborers. These few have now been joined by thousands.

With their blood and courage, the freedom fighters of Nicaragua have pinned down the Sandinista Army and bought the people of Central America the freedom to choose their own future. We must not let them down. We must not let them down. We must not let them down.

40 Years Ago, The Truman Doctrine

Forty years ago, Republicans and Democrats joined together behind the Truman Doctrine. It must be our policy, Harry Truman declared, to support people struggling to preserve their freedom. Under that doctrine, Congress sent aid to Greece just in time to save that country from the closing grip of a Communist tyranny. We saved freedom in Greece then, and with that same bipartisan spirit

we can save freedom in Nicaragua today.

Over the coming days, I will continue the dialogue with members of Congress, talking to them, listening to them, hearing out their concerns. Senator Scoop Jackson, who led the fight on Capitol Hill for an awareness of danger in Central America, said it best: On matters of national security, the best politics is no politics.

You know, recently one of our most distinguished Americans, Clara Bove Luce, had this to say about the coming vote: "In considering this crisis," Mrs. Luce said, "my mind goes back to a similar moment in our history — back to the first years after Cuba had fallen to Fidel. One day during those years, I had lunch at the White House with a man I had known since he was a boy — John F. Kennedy. Mr. President, I said, 'no matter how exalted or great a man may be, history will have time to give him no more than one sentence. George Washington — he founded our country. Abraham Lincoln — he freed the slaves and preserved the union. Winston Churchill — he saved Europe.'

REAGAN CONDEMNS THE SANDINISTAS

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right on the doorstep of the United States?" added Mr. Reagan, whose speech was designed to put pressure on Congress and the American people, face in Nicaragua. Beyond this, Mr. Reagan pointedly raised the historic stakes tonight and placed his own prestige on the line, defining the House vote this week as a fundamental test of his Presidency.

"I have only three years left to serve my country," he said, "three years to carry out the responsibilities you entrusted to me. Could there be any greater tragedy than for us to sit back and permit this cancer to spread, leaving my successor to face far more agonizing decisions in the years ahead?"

"Most Powerful Argument?"

White House officials said the speech was designed to present "the most powerful argument we have on how Nicaragua threatens the security and vital interests of the United States."

A key White House official said tonight: "We don't see this as an ideological right-left issue. This is a different beast down there, a beast that ultimately threatens the United States."

Mr. Reagan, pointing to maps that he said showed Nicaraguan arms exports in the region as well as the strategic importance of Central America to the United States, portrayed the Sandinista Government as one that had built the largest "military machine" in Central America.

He also said the Sandinistas offered a haven for numerous international terrorist groups, provided weapons and training to radicals in at least a dozen nations in Latin America, persecuted and killed religious workers and served as a center for international narcotics traffic.

When he said a photograph he said was secretly taken at a military airfield outside Managua, Mr. Reagan said, "I know every American parent concerned about the drug problem will be outraged to learn that top Nicaraguan Government officials are deeply involved in drug traffic."

He said the photo showed Frederico Vaughn, "a top aide to one of the nine top officials who rule Nicaragua, loading an aircraft with illegal narcotics, bound for the United States."

The White House identified the Nicaraguans as an aide to Tomas Borge, Nicaragua's interior minister, and said the photograph was taken at an airfield controlled by the interior Ministry aid "under the watchful eye of a kingpin in the Colombian drug trade."

"There seems to be no crime to which the Sandinistas will not stoop — and an outlaw regime," Mr. Reagan said.

"Inflammatory," Managua Says

The Nicaraguan Embassy, in a statement issued before Mr. Reagan's speech, said the statement was "inflammatory" and "a serious and irresponsible U.S. policy towards Central America is urgently needed and should not be substituted by inflammatory rhetoric based on false premises and outright distortion."

The embassy said that "contrary to the President's assertion, more efforts to the rebels would only damage efforts to do good. The statement said Reagan Administration policy in the region raised the possibility of 'creeping military involvement of U.S. combat troops in Nicaragua' and 'the trigger a bloody regional war in Central America.'

At a White House briefing before the President's speech, a senior Administration official said that Mr. Reagan's speech was issued as vital to "hemispheric security and the fate of democracy" and that approval of the military and economic aid could result in "Soviet reassessment of their fundamental policy options."

As for the votes in Congress, the official said that "we still have a ways to go," particularly in the House. He said an estimate the need for 10 to 12 votes in the House was "in the ballpark."

The official also said there was "some work to do" in the Senate but predicted that the Senate would be influenced by a favorable House result.

The official said that "most Central American heads of state" supported President Reagan's program and put military pressure on the Sandinista Government but were unwilling to say so in public. "They are not ready to say we can get this program through Congress," he said.

Mr. Reagan, in his speech, said he had no plans to use American troops in Nicaragua. "They are not needed," the President said.

Sandinista View of Contra Debate; Ortega Takes a Vacation

By STEPHEN KINZER
Special to the New York Times
MANAGUA, Nicaragua, March 16 — When Congress was debating aid to the Nicaraguan rebels last year, it seemed that most Government business in Nicaragua came to a halt every time a Sandinista in the country joined the campaign against the proposals.

This year, it is different. With the military situation well in hand, the Sandinistas have appeared much less preoccupied by the debate in Washington.

"It's not that we aren't interested, because we certainly are," the aid to be cut," Vice President Sergio Ramirez Mercado said in an interview. "But we are not involved in the debate. We are not actors. It is something the Congressmen have to decide, not us."

This Year's Trip: Cuba

Last year Congress first rejected and then approved the Reagan Administration's request for \$27 million in non-lethal aid to the rebels, who are known as the Contras. With the Sandinista administration is now seeking to send rebels \$100 million, \$70 million of which would be used to buy military equipment. The House of Representatives is

scheduled to take up the request this week.

Some American politicians expressed outrage last year when the Nicaraguan leader, Daniel Ortega Saavedra, tried to Moscow just as the aid was being cut. The move was seen as an important factor in shifting Congressional sentiment in favor of aid to the Contras.

Despite that controversy, the Sandinistas have not changed their travel habits. Congress prepared to vote on the \$100 million aid in early March, President Ortega took his family for a working vacation in Cuba.

"They're so worried in Washington that the President went on vacation," an ambassador said.

Military Advances Seen

While the Ortega was in Cuba, another top Sandinista official, Bayardo Arce Castaño, flew to Moscow to attend the Communist Party congress.

At the time the Ortega was in Cuba, other top Sandinista officials were in favor of aiding the Contras, as President Reagan did tonight in a nationally televised address. Sandinista leaders no longer jump to react. Their official newspaper, Barricada, which once devoted long columns to rebutting arguments advanced in Washington, now all but ignores them.

According to diplomats and other specialists, the Sandinista Government has made major military advances in the last year. These successes appear to have boosted Sandinista leaders' renewed confidence that they will stand any renewed rebel campaign, which it is financed by the United States.

"The Contras have no perspective of any kind," Mr. Ramirez said. "They are a bunch of mad men, poorly designed and is now falling apart."

Increase the Morale

On Friday, Mr. Ramirez met with nine Republican members of Congress who were visiting Managua. Later he indicated that the Government did not feel pressed to make any concessions.

The vote in Washington is inevitable," he said, "because we are going to wipe out the Contras whether or not they get \$100 million."

In recent days President Reagan and senior Administration officials have argued that rejection of the aid proposal would increase the possibility that United States troops might, at some point, be sent to fight in Central

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